



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

ICE arrests unauthorized workers at L.A. Department of Water and Power *Eight unauthorized employees identified during year-long review of utility's personnel records*

LOS ANGELES – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested five unauthorized workers employed by the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) today, capping a year-long joint review of the utility's hiring records by ICE and LADWP that resulted in the arrest of eight unauthorized workers overall.

Today's arrests took place at the utility's headquarters downtown in coordination with the LADWP's human resources department. The illegal workers identified during ICE's investigation held both professional and blue collar positions, ranging from a management analyst and customer service representative to a water sampling technician and a maintenance worker. One of the unauthorized employees was an electrical engineering associate.

The unauthorized workers identified during the review of the LADWP's nearly 7,000 employee records included foreign nationals from four countries - Ethiopia, Nigeria, El Salvador, and Mexico. All of the unauthorized workers were processed for administrative immigration violations and will be placed in deportation proceedings. ICE may seek to criminally prosecute one of the workers for making a false claim to United States citizenship.

The LADWP cooperated fully with ICE's investigation, which is part of ICE's ongoing effort to target illegal workers with access to critical infrastructure worksites around the country, such as nuclear plants, U.S. military installations, airports, and seaports. There is no evidence that any of the unauthorized workers have terrorist ties.

All of the workers identified during ICE's investigation had initially been legally admitted to the United States, but several were here on visas that did not authorize them to work. One of the employees is a lawful permanent resident, or "green card" holder, who has a criminal conviction that renders him deportable.

"In many cases, companies such as DWP seek to hire legal workers, only to have their efforts undermined by employees who present counterfeit documents or knowingly violate the conditions of their admission," said Julie L. Myers, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for ICE. "When a person uses fraud or false documents to obtain a job, they mask not only their true identities, but also their motives and in some cases, their criminal history."

“Protecting our critical infrastructure is our department’s highest priority. We cooperated fully with ICE on this review and are committed to doing everything possible to ensure the safety and security of our city’s power and water supply,” said LADWP General Manager Ron Deaton. “Our experience underscores the reality that, contrary to the common perception, unauthorized workers can be found on all rungs of the job ladder.”

ICE is significantly enhancing its worksite enforcement efforts as part of its interior enforcement strategy. The Administration is seeking \$41.7 million in new funding in its fiscal year 2007 budget request. The budget increase would support the hiring of an additional 171 special agents and 35 support personnel to enhance existing worksite enforcement investigations.

The budget request also provides an additional \$135 million to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) to expand the current Employment Verification pilot program to support a national electronic employment authorization verification system. The current basic pilot program is a voluntary electronic authorization program enabling an employer to confirm the employment eligibility of all newly hired workers. In an address to the nation earlier this week, President Bush also called for the creation of a tamper-proof identification card for all legal foreign workers as part of a comprehensive immigration reform plan.

Last fiscal year, ICE initiated 511 criminal worksite investigations, resulting in 165 criminal arrests, 140 criminal indictments, and 127 criminal convictions. In addition, these efforts resulted in the arrest of 980 individuals on administrative immigration violations.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.